

## Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program (AFEP)

### What is it?

- AFEP—formerly called People with Arthritis Can Exercise (PACE)—is a group recreational exercise program designed by the Arthritis Foundation. The program promotes physical activity as a strategy for managing arthritis symptoms and improving or maintaining mobility, strength, and physical function.
- AFEP classes are an hour long and meet twice a week. Participants can take them in 8–12 week sessions or on an ongoing basis.
- Each class begins with a brief health education session to review topics important for managing arthritis. Participants then engage in a series of range-of-motion, stretching, strength-building, and conditioning exercises; balance and coordination activities; and relaxation and breathing techniques.
- All activities are safe for people with arthritis and can be modified for different skill levels. Depending on participants' physical limitations, the intensity of the exercises can also be adapted, and they can be performed while participants are seated, standing, or lying on the floor.
- Instructors are health or fitness professionals who have completed an 8-hour Arthritis Foundation training workshop.

### Who is it for?

- AFEP is designed for people with arthritis who want to safely increase their physical activity levels.
- Participants can range from people who are sedentary and have very limited joint mobility, to those who are relatively active and have only mild joint impairment.

### What are the benefits?

- In preliminary evaluations of AFEP, participants experienced symptom relief such as reduced pain and fatigue, less depression, and increased confidence in their ability to manage their arthritis and remain active in their daily lives.
- A randomized, controlled trial of AFEP funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed these findings, particularly in participants who attend more than half of the class sessions.

### For More Information

- Arthritis Foundation  
[www.arthritis.org/exercise.php](http://www.arthritis.org/exercise.php)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/arthritis/interventions/physical\\_activity.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/interventions/physical_activity.htm)

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## Contact

## References

Minor MA, Prost E, Nigh M, et al. Outcomes from the Arthritis Foundation exercise program: a randomized controlled trial. *Arthritis and Rheumatism*. 2007;56:S309.

Callahan LF, Mielenz T, Freberger J, et al. A randomized controlled trial of the People with Arthritis Can Exercise Program: symptoms, function, physical activity, and psychosocial outcomes. *Arthritis and Rheumatism*. 2008;59(1):92–101. PMID: 18163409.

## Summary of the Evidence

Author, Year	Design	Participants	Outcomes
Minor MA, Prost E, Nigh M, et al. (2007)	RCT comparing 8-week with 16-week PACE  Outcomes assessed at 8 and 16 weeks, with followup at 6 months	174 participants with rheumatic disease	Outcomes similar for both groups at 8 weeks: ↓ pain, fatigue ↑ self-efficacy, physical function  Improvements in physical symptoms sustained at 6 months
Callahan LF, Mielenz T, Freberger J, et al. (2008)	RCT of 8-week PACE program  Outcomes assessed at 8 weeks with followup at 6 months	346 participants with self-reported arthritis	↓ pain, fatigue ↑ self-efficacy, use of upper/lower extremities